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## THE FIRST GREAT CHRISTIAN CREED

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The relation of Jesus Christ the Son to God the Father was a question not fully determined by any common action of the church until the Council of Nicaea, in 325. How to preserve the unity of God, how to be true to Christianity as a monotheistic religion, and yet be true to the universal conscience of the church that in Christ she had a divine Savior and Lord, that was the question. There were different answers to it in that ante-Nicene age. (It is not the intention to give here a history of the doctrine of the Person of Christ in that age, but simply to select a few outstanding men.) There was the answer, for instance, of the Monarchians, sometimes called Unitarians, of whom there were two schools, the Dynamistic and the Modalistic. The chief man of the first school was Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch after 260, an original and fruitful thinker, who might be called in a sense the father of Unitarianism. The Logos and Spirit were not subsistences in God, but simply powers in him, like the mind and reason of man. This reason existed in the man Jesus above all other creatures, and this man remained free from sin owing to the large measure of this indwelling divine reason, so that he conquered sin for the whole race, and became Savior and Lord. There resulted an ethical oneness with God. "In the oneness of the will, in the immutability of love man becomes indissolubly united with Deity, under the influence of the Logos progressively deified." According to Paul of Samosata, Christ was only a man as to his entire nature (though born miraculously), but he became divine through the indwelling divine reason and could be worshiped. Many so-called "liberals" today are the unconscious followers of Paul of Samosata.

The second, or Modalistic, school of Monarchians, sometimes called Patripassians, had as their chief representative Praxeas, who

came to Rome from Asia Minor about 170, and apparently won some of the Roman popes into sympathy with his views. According to the Patripassians there is no God but God the Father. By self-humiliation he became man, so that the Son is the Father veiled in the flesh. There is no God but the one manifested in Christ, a view like that of the Swedenborgians. Here the divinity of Christ is completely preserved, but by the sacrifice of the personal, substantial pre-existence with God. It is interesting to note that both of these Monarchian schools tried to be true in some sense to a real divinity of Jesus. That he was a mere man in the recent Unitarian sense, or that he came into the world by ordinary means, they never thought.

Another answer to this question was that of the Sabellians, which also preserves the divinity of the Savior, though in a startling way. Sabellius was a daring thinker (flourished about 200), who started from the philosophical idea of the divine monad immanent in the world, expanding or contracting for its work in the universe. God unfolds or expands himself into a threefold, successive revelation, first as God the Father in the Old Testament, second as God the Son in the incarnation and redemption, and third as God the Spirit in quickening, enlightening, and saving. The monad thus becomes a triad, which finally returns into the monad state, after the work of salvation is complete. This view makes Christ too divine, if one might so speak; that is, it denies a real incarnation.

At the Council of Nicaea there were two views in mortal conflict—the Athanasian and the Arian. The Athanasian held that in some mysterious sense Jesus Christ existed as Son or Logos eternally with the Father, and that he came forth for our salvation at the incarnation. This pre-existence was a substantial and, in a sense, a personal one (but not in our modern sense of the word personal). Arius held that Christ had no eternal pre-existence with God, who alone is eternal, unchangeable. God is separated by an infinite chasm from man—a Gnostic and Hindu idea. God cannot create the world directly, but only through an agent, the Logos, who is himself created for the purpose of creating the world. But this creature is before all time and before the world. The Logos is higher than all creatures, is the middle being between God and the world, the image of the Father, his executor, and the creator of the world. He might in a

secondary sense be called "God," but he is a creature, made out of nothing by the will of the Father, and is changeable and imperfect.

Now this view of Arius did not spring out of the ground, and it did not drop ready-made from heaven. It had its antecedents in the church. What were they? Let us see where some of the views of the great church teachers, from Justin Martyr to Arius, anticipate Athanasius and Arius, and thus notice how both were in a line of development.

Justin Martyr (flourished 150) thought that the Logos came forth from God by generation without division or diminution of the divine substance, and thus he (the Logos or Christ) is the only and absolute Son of God, the only begotten. He is divine therefore in the full sense and may be worshiped. But this generation is not an eternal one immanent in the divine essence, but took place through the will of God before time. Christ is the incarnation of the reason of God, is the first-begotten of God, and thus may be worshiped with the Father, but yet is subordinate to the Father. Justin is not clearly Athanasian, much less Arian. He might be called an undeveloped Athanasian. Had he lived later he would, as Semisch has shown, have subscribed to the Nicene Creed.

Clement of Alexandria (died about 235) has both the formula and the conception of the Trinity. Christ is the Logos of God, active in the world from the beginning, the cause of our being and of our well-being, the only one both God and man, the cause of all things good in us. The Logos became man that we might be taught how we may become divine. Christ as God forgives sin. Here we have a doctrine of Christ's divinity in general harmony with the church view, but not fully defined.

Tertullian (flourished 200) taught that the Logos is a real subsistence, a being proceeding from God and begotten by him, but begotten not from eternity but at some distinct time. There was a time when the Son was not, but this does not make the Son a creature in the ordinary sense (his being is not by creation but by generation or procession—*prolatio*, "extension" [*A pol.* 21]), for as to his nature he is one with the Father. He is personally distinct from God, but substantially one with him. The Father is the whole substance, the Son a division or portion of the whole. Tertullian was Athanasian

then as to the substantial oneness of Christ with the Father, as to his absolute divinity in nature, but Arian as to Christ's origin. He might be called an Athanasian Subordinationist.

Origen (died 254) came still nearer to Athanasius in looking upon God as always Father, who always generates the Son (as the sun always generates light and heat) who is his image, his crown, his wisdom, his Logos. There is then a unity of substance with God, he is *ὁμοούσιος* ("of the same essence") with the Father. At the same time he has a separate hypostasis, which does not mean a separate existence in the human sense, for both God and the Logos have the same will, the same activity, the same thought. Here we have an entirely Athanasian Christ. But still Origen has another side to his Christology. Christ's being, though fully divine, is still derived from God the Father and rests on God the Father. He is the "second God," properly God, but as the image of the Father. He has the attributes of God, but as the emanation and image of the Father. One can pray to him, not as the absolute God, but as the executive of God; and yet it is better to pray to the Father. "Christ is God as is the Father, like him eternal; yet he is the 'second God,' and dependent on the Father."

It will be seen from this review that there was an Arian side—if we may so call it—to some of the great teachers in the second and third centuries; but that this side was a small one, their larger view being that of the actual divinity of Christ. Now suppose someone should take hold of that Arian side, develop it logically, carry it out into a consistent Christology—there you would have Arianism, there you would have a created Christ, with certain divine qualities. It is not meant by this that Arius really carried out in any fair way the subordinationism of Origen and other Fathers, as Neander (*Ch. Hist.*, II, 403, 404) seems to think, for I believe thoroughly with Thomasius (*DG.*, 2 Aufl., I, 214, 215) that he took that theory out of its connection and use, since with Origen and others it had a different significance, aimed at a different error, as it stood with them against a negation of the independent personality of Christ, against Monarchianism, whereas with Arius it was used against the deity of Christ. The non-Arian side of the Fathers was really their larger and deeper view, for Thomasius is right in saying that in so far as it denied

that deity, it "stood in opposition to the whole historical development hitherto, it was an attempt to lead it back to Ebionism—a fundamental (*grundstürzende*) heresy."

We have failed to mention one great teacher who is the link between Paul of Samosata and Arius, namely, Lucian of Antioch (flourished 275-303) who is said by some to have also sprung from Samosata, and who shared and taught at Antioch Paul of Samosata's views. Here he had as his pupils all those who afterward became known as Arians, namely, Arius himself, Eusebius bishop of Nicomedia, Maris bishop of Chalcedon, Theognis bishop of Nicaea, Leontius bishop of Antioch, etc. But in one point Lucian differed from Paul of Samosata, namely, in teaching the separate creation of the Logos before time began and his full personality in Jesus. But Lucian was the father of Arianism. It is significant that Paul was put down from his episcopate in Antioch about 268, and that Lucian himself was out of communion with the church there through three episcopates. But whether these disagreements with the Antioch church were solely due to doctrinal disputes, we cannot tell. Later Lucian stood high in the Greek church, and his followers seemed to feel that they were good Catholic Christians.

Arius, then, a presbyter in Alexandria, a pupil of Lucian, came out in the first quarter of the fourth century with a full-fledged Unitarianism, couched in terms made familiar by the discussions of the two preceding centuries. God only is without beginning; the Son had a beginning before all time; the Son is the Logos and wisdom of the Father, but not the Logos immanent in God, but a created being who received a share of the immanent Logos. This created Son created the world, and received so much of the divine favor that he receives the names God and Son of God, though he is unlike the substance or nature of the Father in all respects. Though mutable, God saw that the Son or Logos would remain good, so he bestowed upon him in advance the pay which his life merited. Arius differed from Paul of Samosata in teaching that Christ did not have a human soul. These views Arius set forth with great zeal and polemic vigor, preaching them everywhere, composing hymns, interesting all classes of people, winning followers wherever he could. Of course, his old fellow-students under Lucian took up his views.

Now it is instructive that no sooner did Arius come forth with these ideas than he evoked a bitter opposition. Alexander, his bishop, preached against him with great positiveness, teaching the Athanasian view, which shows that there was a great doctrinal tradition in the church which Arius' view outraged. So interested was Alexander in getting a consensus of opinion on Arius that he called two synods (320 or 321), in both of which the latter was condemned. Arius then appealed to his friends in Asia Minor, those under the influence of Lucian and his circle, and a synod in Bithynia favored him. The strife spread, and Constantine, who had only recently become sole ruler of the Roman world, and who had the heathen idea of the oneness of religion being necessary to the oneness of the state, or if there were differences that they should be held peaceably and buried under outward uniformity, felt that measures must be taken to restore peace to the church. For this purpose he called a council to meet at Nicaea, in Bithynia, where he had a summer palace, twenty miles from his regular capital at Nicomedia. Nicaea was then an important town on the great highway of commerce, and easily accessible by water from all parts of the empire. This is the first ecumenical council (325), a turning-point in the history of the church, a date which stands with 1517 as the best known in church history. It was not actually an ecumenical or universal council, however, as the number of bishops there were at the most only about three hundred, when there were really about eighteen hundred bishops in the empire. Nor was it representative as to sections of the empire, as the whole western church had only seven delegates.

Constantine cared for the council with princely generosity. He paid all the traveling expenses of the delegates and of their presbyters and servants and saw to their entertainment in Nicaea. This brought all the delegates under personal obligation to him, and helped to secure the adhesion of the council to the views indorsed by him.

What was the opinion of the majority of the council when they came together? Bernoulli says that the most of them had no decided views one way or the other. Some were ignorant, others had never heard of the controversy, others looked upon Christ as Lord and Savior without having thought through the theological implications of that belief, others still were willing to vote according to the strongest

arguments, yet others according to the emperor's wish. Though not acting as president, the emperor was really moderator of the council, hearing one and then another, trying to calm the Hotspurs, producing reasons himself, and making every effort to get some united decision.

It is significant of the strength of the Athanasian view that Constantine, though originally surrounded by those entirely or partially in sympathy with Arius, changed his opinion. His bishop at Nicomedia (Eusebius) was an Arian; the bishop at Nicaea itself, Theognis, was an Arian; and the emperor's friend and later panegyrist, Eusebius bishop of Caesarea, the church historian, was at least not a strong Athanasian, but rather a follower of Origen. "He preferred," says Bernoulli "the modal theology of the Orient, poorly decked out with philosophical tinsel work; and he could not decide to believe in the unity of the nature of the Son with the Father" (*Das Konzil von Nicaea*, Freib. i. Br. and Lpz., 1896, 9). Naturally the half-heathen Constantine would be inclined to the doctrine of Lucian and Arius, which fitted in well with the Roman pantheon. Then he gave Arius, a presbyter condemned by the councils and bishop of his own province, a seat in the council, where he took part in the debates and explained and defended his views. Besides, as just said, the bishops of the east who were nearest to Constantine were Arians and semi-Arians. When we add to all this the fact that the Arians went to the council with unconcealed confidence that they would be victorious, we may be quite sure on whose side Constantine was at the beginning. The fact that in spite of this tremendous difficulty the Athanasians won both the council and the emperor speaks volumes.

Outside of the dummies and other neutrals, there were three parties at the beginning—the right, center, and left.<sup>1</sup> The right

<sup>1</sup> Seeck (*ZKG.*, XVII, 10 [1897]) says that there were only two parties, and this is true in the sense of the final and logical disposition of the members. But it is not true in the ordinary sense, as may be seen from Eusebius of Caesarea's letter (in *Socr.* I, 8 and appendix to Athanasius' *De Decr.*) compared with Theod. I, 6. First, the Arians presented their creed through Eusebius of Nicomedia, which was rejected, then the middle party presented the Caesarean creed, which was accepted with the additions insisted upon by the Athanasians. The actual numbering in the sources gives two parties (cf. *εχάτερον ταγμα* in Eus., *Vita Const.*, iii, 13, and Ath., *De Deor.*, ii, 3), while the historical facts in the sources imply three. So with the world outside. See also Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism* (London, 1882), 52, indorsed by Harnack, *Hist. of Dogma*, III, 137, note.



wing was the Athanasian, apparently not the largest, but the wisest, the most deeply convinced, the most firmly intrenched in the Scriptures and in purely religious arguments, as well as in Christian experience. The members of this party counted, among others, the bishops of most of the apostolic centers, as, e. g., Macarius of Jerusalem, Sylvester of Rome, Eustathius of Antioch, Alexander of Alexandria, as well as Hosius of Cordova, and Marcellus of Ancyra. The center was the mediatory party (headed by the historian, Eusebius of Caesarea), sometimes called the Origenist party. They were "neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring," but they leaned toward the Athanasian view, it would appear, as in the end they generally drifted toward that party. Some of them had no clear views in any direction, so they went in the end with the stronger party. Others of this large section of the council believed earnestly in the real deity of Jesus, but cared nothing for scholastic or metaphysical or philosophical terminology. They knew in whom they believed, but they did not know why they believed it, nor what their belief implied. The left was the Arian party, numbering about 20 bishops, and therefore greatly in the minority. They numbered Arius himself, who fought for his views tooth and nail, his old schoolfellow, Eusebius of Nicomedia, later of Constantinople, and the bishops of the places where the first four ecumenical councils were held, Theognis of Nicaea, Maris of Chalcedon, and Monophantes of Ephesus.

At an early stage in the proceedings Eusebius of Nicomedia drew up an Arian creed which was read by his namesake of Caesarea, probably as president. Unfortunately we have no copy of this creed. But we know that it was instantly rejected; in fact, Eusebius was not allowed to read it through, but it was snatched out of his hand, and torn to pieces (Theod. i, 6). This seems to show that in 325 the church was in no mood to accept Arianism. In fact, the convinced Arians and convinced Athanasians were in a minority in the council, but the latter by sheer power of personality, of reasoning, of logic, and of Christian feeling won over the larger crowd, who were either Origenists or indifferent.

As the Arian creed was rejected Eusebius of Caesarea at length brought forward a creed which as neither distinctly Arian nor Athanasian he thought might be a basis for united action. He called it

"our symbol"; and he says that he learned it from the Scriptures, that he received it from the bishops who preceded him, and that it was the basis of instruction in the church (Theod. i, 11).<sup>2</sup> It reads as follows:

We believe in the one God Almighty Father, the creator of all things visible and invisible, and in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Logos of God, God of God, Light of Light, Life of Life, the only begotten Son, the firstborn of all creation, begotten from God the Father before all time. By him have all things become, who for our salvation became flesh, and lived among men; who suffered on the third day, rose from the dead; who went up to his Father, and will come again in glory to judge the quick and the dead. We believe also in the Holy Spirit. Even so we believe that each one has his own being, that the Father is really Father, the Son really Son, the Holy Spirit really Holy Spirit, as our Lord in sending out his disciples to preach also said, Go forth and make disciples of all peoples through baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And we are determined so to hold and so to think, and to remain faithful in this faith until death, as we also anathematize every Godless heresy.

Now outside of all these Nicene controversies this is a pretty stiff creed. Unitarians today would abominate it, the semi-Unitarians in our orthodox churches could not abide it, and no Ritschlian in the world could sign it. It would create fearful dismay if read in a Liberal Religious Congress. To call Christ the Logos of God, God of God, Light of Light, Life of Life, the only begotten Son, as the middle party were willing to do, is to call him all that one can call him. It is a Trinitarian confession through and through. In the light of that, the other expressions which have an Arian look may be interpreted. "The firstborn of all creatures" is a scriptural expression (Col. 1:15; cf. Heb. 1:5, 6) and refers to the incarnation, fore-ordained in the very dawn of creation. "Begotten of the Father before all time" may refer to Christ's sonship as in thought looking forward from eternity to the incarnation, or it may be simply an equivalent for "in eternity," as before time is eternity.

Still the Arians were ready with their interpretations, and as they seemed to be willing to accept that creed—probably to stave off something worse—the Athanasians were in a quandary. They were

<sup>2</sup> The text of this creed and of its enlarged form as adopted by the Council will be found in the appendix to Athanasius' *De Decretis*, and in the "Church Histories" of Socrates i, 8, Theod. i, 11, etc. See notes of Hahn to both, *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln*, 3 Aufl., 1897, §§123, 142.

willing to accept the creed of Eusebius, but they must introduce a few changes so as to exclude all possibility of error. They wanted "the Logos of God" changed to the "Son of God;" they wanted to strike out the "firstborn of all creatures;" they wanted to change "begotten of the Father before all time" to "He was begotten of the Father;" they wanted to place the expression "only begotten" at the end, and finally instead of "Life of Life," which of course they believed, they preferred the words "true God of true God." They also wanted to add two or three things not given in the Caesarea creed, so as to make assurance doubly sure against Arius: (1) They were anxious to put in, "who is from the essence (or "being," οὐσίας) of the Father;" (2) they added "begotten, not made;" and (3) they clinched the whole thing by the words, "of the same essence with the Father" (ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ). Now all these three additions were really included in the original "God of God, only begotten Son," etc., but for fear the Arians did not think so the Athanasians were bound to have them in. They also added "and in the Holy Ghost."

But these strong characters who were fighting the battles of the divine Christ against Arius at that council were not even content with these explicit declarations, though they might well have been content. For the victor to press his foe too hardly may cause a reaction, may hasten returning sympathies. To carry your views to their farthest analysis, and then to stuff all your inferences down your opponent's throat, may be stalwart orthodoxy, but it may have consequences that will return to plague you. At the same time it is fair to say that the slipperiness of the Arians in seeming willing to accept strong expressions of Christ's divinity which they interpreted in a way suitable to themselves made the stalwart party determined to exclude their view (Athanasius, *Ad Afros*, 5). At any rate the Athanasians not only insisted on the above additions, but they added a list of the Arian errors, ending with an anathema upon them—fateful anathema! Thus revised and enlarged the Eusebian confession was made the Nicene Creed, the first great deliberately formed creed in history, and it was as follows:

We believe in the one God Almighty Father, the creator of all things visible and invisible, and in the one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, the one only begot-

ten from the Father, and of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things exist which are in heaven and which are on earth, who for us men and our salvation came down and became flesh, took on the form of a man, suffered, and on the third day rose from the dead, and went up into heaven, and comes again to judge the living and the dead, and in the Holy Spirit.

Those who say, There was when he was not, or, He was not before he was begotten, or, He was made out of nothing, or, He was begotten out of another substance or essence, or, The Son of God (is created or) is changeable or alterable—these the Catholic (and apostolic) church anathematizes.

Now the remarkable thing is that this strong Athanasian Creed won the assent of nearly every member of the council. Only two men stood by Arius and refused to sign (one account says five, of whom two repented and signed). Why this success of the right wing?

1. The fact that the middle party became convinced that their creed (see above) was in absolute agreement with these Athanasian additions, required them for its proper explanation. This comes out in Eusebius of Caesarea's letter of explanation to his church (*Socr. H. E.*, 1, 8). This letter shows the deliberation and discussion which these additions received and the fact that they were accepted only because they were the fair inference of their own faith, which in fact they were ("we received them," says Eusebius, "when in mature deliberation we examined the sense of his words, and they appeared to agree with what we had originally proposed as a sound confession"). The remark made about forcing one's inferences upon others must not lead us to suppose that the center were precipitately induced against their will to receive the additions. On the contrary, the sources show their calm deliberation, and their ultimate and voluntary conviction of the truth of those additions. The Origenists were in the half-way house to the Athanasians, and they must either go backward or forward. Their reluctance to follow the logical implications of their creed was their dread of Sabellianism and their dread of losing the historic Jesus, and they did well to dread both.

2. The profound religious interest which centered in the Athanasian view. The Arians had a cosmology, and their view (really semi-gnostic) fitted admirably into it. But they had no soteriology, no philosophy of salvation. But Athanasius' theology was built on the background of Calvary. It was interwoven with his soteriology.

It is necessary to religion, he argued, that an actual real connection or union should exist between man and God, between heaven and earth. There is no help for us in a God who is over us in a vast universe, without taking hold of us. If we should express the faith truly we must declare the actual incarnation of God, that Jesus Christ really went out from the highest Lord of the heavens. Only then can we be confident in our redemption. It was the feeling of Athanasius—and he evidently made all his party feel it also—that the very existence of Christianity as a religion of redemption was bound up with the acknowledgment of Christ as truly divine. History has shown that he was right there. If the first step is a letting-down of Jesus' divinity the second step is bound to be an explaining away of his atonement. It was this tremendous religious interest—"for us men and our salvation"—of the right wing which made them victorious at Nicaea.

It was not for a word or a formula [says Harnack, *Hist. of Dogma*, III, 140, 141, finely] that Athanasius was concerned, but a crucial thought of his faith, the redemption and raising of humanity to divine life through the God-man. It was only from the certainty that the divinity manifest in Jesus Christ possessed the nature of deity (unity of being) and was on this account alone in a position to raise us to a divine life that faith was to receive its strength, life its law, and theology its direction. . . . Behind and beside him existed a speculation which led on a shoreless sea, and the ship was in danger of losing its helm. He grasped the rudder.

3. It was a tribute to personality. Eusebius of Nicomedia was not a strong character, did not have a single eye, or he would not have drawn up an Arian creed and at length signed an Athanasian one. The head of the middle wing, Eusebius of Caesarea, was a cultured and learned man, but he had—like Erasmus—the scholar's mind, not the theologian's, and his whole inner nature, his religious experience, was not so absorbed in his Christology that he felt he must stand by one view rather than by another. He was therefore really open to conviction from the Athanasian side. I have already said that the mass of the council were men either open to conviction from the strongest arguments or to pressure from the strongest arm. It is not necessary to say who possessed the arguments.

On the other hand the Athanasians had men of positive influence. Athanasius himself, in the conferences of his party and in the outside

meetings and casual debates with the middle and left wings, must have exercised an enormous influence. In the council itself there was Eustathius of Antioch, a great and notable man. There was Alexander of Alexandria who was no mean antagonist, but a clear, strong thinker. There was Marcellus of Ancyra, who was a man of iron will and immense power of resistance, whose presence among the Athanasians meant a great deal. There was Hosius of Cordova, an intimate friend of the emperor, who possessed power in conciliation and persuasion, and who well supplemented the theological work of his colleagues with his diplomatic and skilful mediations and explanations.<sup>3</sup> A doctrine that could train and inspire men like these deserves to win.

4. The Athanasian party were not only convinced, but they were united, and this, with the additional fact that they possessed the apostolic seats—Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria (traditionally St. Mark's), Rome, etc.—must have at length made an impression on the majority and on the emperor.

5. This leads me to say that another reason for the Athanasian victory was the convincing of the assembly that the older and sounder tradition was on that side. Eusebius says that he "did well to assent" to the idea that Christ was one in essence with the Father because "we were aware that even among the ancients some learned and illustrious bishops and writers have used the term 'one in essence' in their theological teachings concerning the Father and the Son."<sup>4</sup> Harnack agrees with this, and says (III, 141, 142) that "there was nothing new in the common sense of the word" in Athanasius' views; "he had really on his side the best part of the tradition of the church. New alone was *the fact*, the energy and exclusiveness of his view and action at a time when everything threatened to undoing and dissolution."

6. The emperor. We cannot eliminate him from the victory at Nicaea. He was not mainly responsible, but he was in part respons-

<sup>3</sup> The Arians are later represented as ascribing immense influence to Hosius in this matter. See Athan., *Hist. Arian.*, §42. "He put forth the faith in Nicaea," they are supposed to say, though as remarked by Loofs, *D. G.*, 4 Aufl., 241, not rightly.

<sup>4</sup> See his epistle to his church in Caesarea in appendix to Athanasius, *De Decretis*, and compare Athanasius' own statements as to "testimony from their fathers, ancient bishops," etc., in *Ad Afros*, 6.

ible. "He advised all present to agree to" the Caesarean creed, says Eusebius, and in his *Life of Constantine* (III, 13) he—doubtless with a courtier's exaggeration—makes him alone responsible for the final unanimity, "urging all to unity of sentiment, until at last he succeeded in bringing them to one mind and judgment respecting every disputed question." But why did the emperor come over to the right wing, when with his paganism and his court influences at Nicomedia he would naturally have been borne toward Arius? His conversion is to be explained. Was it his homage to strength, his feeling that the men on the right had the deepest convictions, and that finally these convictions thus strongly held by the strongest men must eventually prevail? Was it a dim perception that, after all, the arguments of Alexander's party were the more convincing, and that Christianity to be a winning religion over against paganism must have an absolutely divine Savior and Lord? His own letter to the Alexandrians after the Council (Socr., i, 9) shows that the almost unanimous decision of so many impressed him deeply ("for that which has commended itself to the judgment of 300 bishops cannot be other than the judgment of God," he says; "seeing that the Holy Spirit dwelling in the minds of so many dignified persons has effectually enlightened them respecting the divine will").

Bernoulli (*Herzog-Hauck*, 3 Aufl., XIV [1904], 15) says that for their victory the Athanasians must thank their own energy. But he also says that that victory was due in part to a successful intrigue. When we come, however, to specification as to what the intrigue was, we are left in the dark. He accuses the Athanasians of two things: (1) of cutting out the biblical formulas from the Caesarean symbol, and in their place setting in theological statements which guaranteed the exclusion of Arianism in the sharpest way. But if these biblical expressions were used unbiblically to teach unbiblical doctrines, and if the Athanasians must preserve at all hazards the actual deity of Jesus, were they to blame for insisting on their own formulae? (2) of using their influence on the emperor for the victory of their side. This, he says, was their intrigue. But nothing further is alleged. He does not say they used their influence badly or unfairly. The emperor had to decide for some side. The fact that he did not decide for the side he would naturally have favored speaks for stronger

reasons on the side that prevailed. "It was not necessity which drove the judges to their decision," says Athanasius (*Ep. Aegypt.*, 13), "but all vindicated the truth from deliberate purpose."

It is the custom long since to decry the historic creeds and to depreciate the men who made them. Certainly all will admit that the appealing and binding power of the creed is its truth alone, which truth must not be burdened with the methods of its advocates. At the same time this must be said: speaking after the manner of men, the Nicene Council and Creed saved the Christian religion. At that council two conceptions of Christianity were in a death struggle, one that a created mediator was given to help men, the other that the eternal Son of God himself was incarnated to redeem men and to unite men and God. One gives an ethical religion, a finer Stoicism, a gnostic demiurge-theosophy, which would have been utterly helpless in the storms that were to come; the other is the religion of the Incarnation, of redemption, of salvation through faith, of eternal life in the Eternal Son. The parties in that struggle at the bottom were two only, the Arians and the Athanasians, and it was the great service of the latter that they stuck to their guns until they carried the middle party, whose deeper principles they saw logically led to their own views, made that party see that such was the case, and brought almost every man of them to their own Caesarean creed as now first logically expressed. But would it not have been better to have done that by argument, by the force of truth itself, without a council and creed? Doubtless. But that method was then historically impossible. To the fact that the believers in the deity of Christ fought their fight at that council as God gave them opportunity we owe it today that Christianity exists not alone on ancient records but as a regnant and regenerating force in humanity.